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Expert Fears Violence in U.S. Is Going to Get Worse

By WILLIAM K. STEVENS

A psychiatric specialist in the study of violence said yesterday he saw in the current wave of New York City bombings the onset of a period of American neo-anarchisman era of "group violence" based on a collective consciousness of society's ills, but fired by individual feelings of loss and hurt.

"And I'm afraid it's going to get worse," Dr. David Abrahamson said in an interview in his office-apartment on Fifth Avenue at 85th Street. As he spoke, buildings farther downtown were being evacuated because of bomb threats.

The bomb-planters of 1970 hurts, frustrations and grudges against society that inspired the deeds of Nazis, old-time anarchists and Presidential assassins, Dr. Abrahamson suggested.

Dr. Abrahamsen is the author of "Our Violent Society," a study of American violence published last Jan. 28. He testified on political assassination before the National Commission on Violence and serves as an overseer of the Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence at Brandeis University.

Metesky Case Recalled

In the late nineteen-fifties, he carried out a court-instituted psychological examination of George Metesky, the "mad bomber" who planted 47 bombs in public places in the city between 1940 and 1956.

Metesky, now in a mental hospital, was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic, and therefore a psychotic, Dr. Abrahamsen said. "But these people who throw bombs don't necessarily have to be psychotically insane," he added. "They may merely be highly dissatisfied persons with a grudge against society."

Metesky's specific grudge was against the Consolidated Edison Company, his one-time employer, which he felt had hurt him personally by failing to compensate him properly when he was accidentally gassed while in the company's service.

The fundamental grudge of today's politically oriented bombers, who may or may not be psychotic, is directed against society at large, Dr. Abrahamsen said.

This grudge, he went on, grows out of something personal—"some hurt, some loss, disharmony in the family, disappointments, personal grudges."

Somehow, Dr. Abrahamsen said, the bomber "twists his own personality conflicts into believing something is wrong with society, and therefore he takes out his grudges against society."

"When you examine a person who has been fabricating bombs, you almost always find a frustrated, almost helpless individual, he said. "It doesn't happen just like that. It takes a long time in development."

Because there has been no fundamental change in the character of American society, Dr. Abrahamsen continued, many present-day radicals have now become desperate. "And so through bombs and threats they are now attempting to turn over our society," he said, "almost like anarchy."

The bombers "are using desperate aim, which reflects their own desperate attitude," he said. "They are hostile and fearful, and having been fundamentally threatened, they threaten others."

Further, Dr. Abrahamsen explained, the bomb-planter most likely hasn't made his mark in the world, but badly wants to. Bombing, he suggester, is a way to call attention to himself.

Similar Pychology

"And so while his inner conflict is personalized, he directs his aggressions at society to displace his anger," he said.

In this there is much of the psychology both of the men who made the Nazi party, and of the old-time anarchists whose anger and frustrations brought about a bomb-throwing reign of terror in late 19th-century Europe, he added.

People who share such characteristics "have an uncanny tendency to seek out people of their own make," he said, "and there you get conspiracies."

The similarity between assassins, political arsonists and bombers, Dr. Abrahamsen explained, is "that they want to annihilate a symbol of what they hate, and they want to show that they have power over people."

Arab terrorists who bombed the passenger terminal of El Al, the Israeli airline, in Athens last November killing a boy and injuring 15 other persons, share this urge to kill off the symbol —in this instance, "whatever stands for Israel—be it an airplane of an air terminal," he said.

What makes one political malcontent pick assassination, another arson, another bombing?

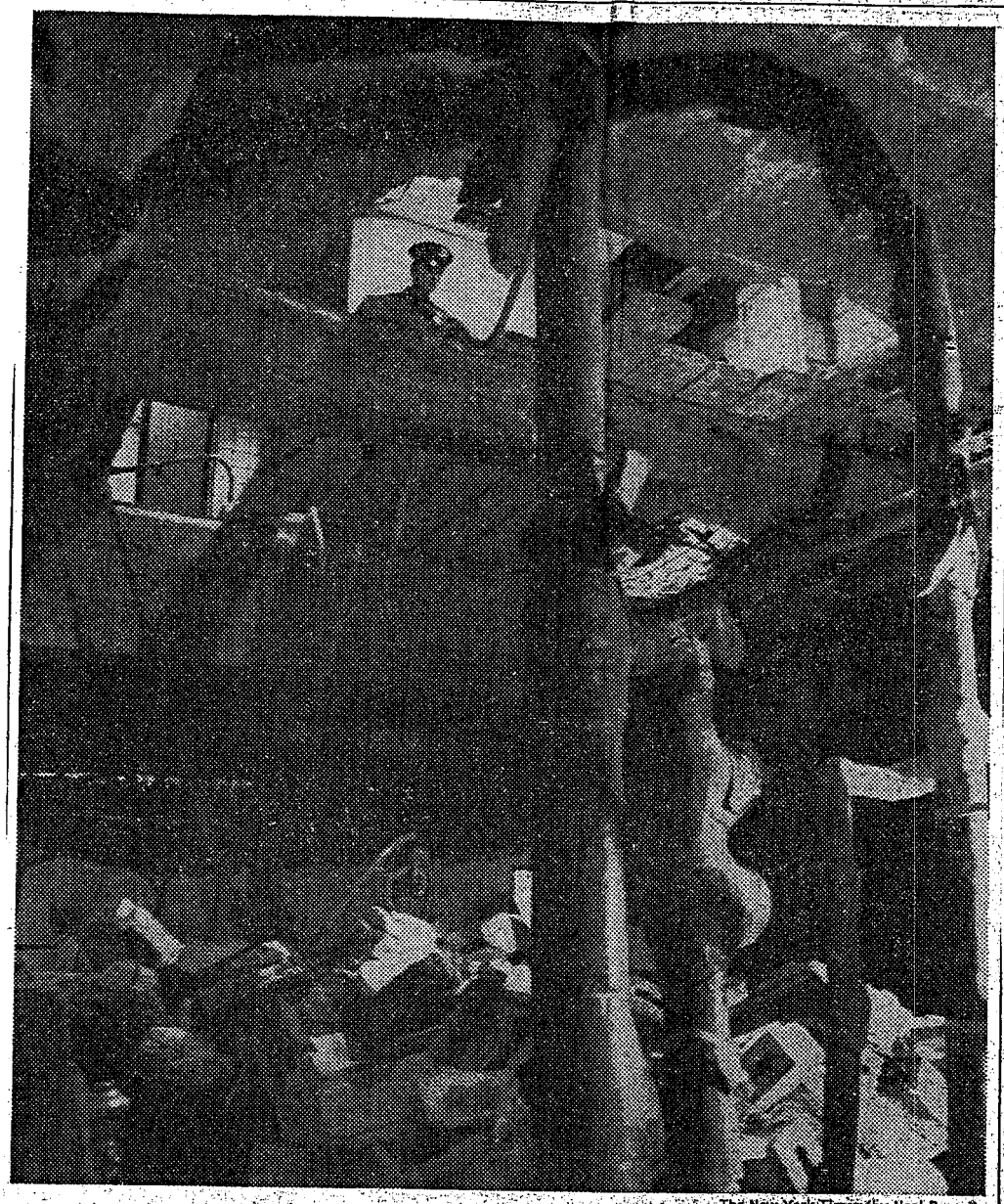
"We don't know the answer," Dr. Abrahamsen said. "It all has to do with the milieu, the timing, what happened in the person's early life, his personality reactions." The vehement anti-military, anti-industrial stance of the radical left might have something to do with the choice of bombs in New York today, he added, since the violence is "more directed to the establishments in society, in contrast to hitting the President."

In any event, he said, the politics of violence is an expression of "the most violent and primitive emotion — revenge; here, revenge against society."

"We live in a climate of violence in America," he added, "and where you have a climate of violence, everything goes."

The New York Times (by Edward Hausner)

AT GENERAL TELEPHONE BUILDING: A plumber surveying damage on 21st floor before starting to make repairs



The New York Times (by Neal Boenzi)

AT SOCONY MOBIL BUILDING: A policeman views bomb damage through hole in ceiling